

Austintown Township

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Cold Hard Facts Verses **Smoke and Mirrors**

The following article was published in the July/August Ohio Township News and is reprinted here with their permission and the permission of the author, Greg Hanahan, President, Ohio Township Association.

The Dispatch editorial from Wednesday, May 23, titled "Mirror, Mirror" was more like smoke and mirrors. The editorial asserts that we don't have detailed data about local government, but despite that, suggests radical changes are needed to the system of local government. If changes to Ohio's system of local government are to be considered, the Ohio Township Association will insist that hard data dictate the results of that analysis. Why? Because the hard data squarely supports the current system of township government in Ohio. In fact, the Ohio Township Association will soon be releasing a major study which is based on a comprehensive data analysis of townships in Ohio.

Policy Institute notes that those figures include school payrolls to reach those totals. When school payrolls are excluded from the calculation, ETPI concluded that "all other local governments in Ohio actually spend less as a percentage of personal income than the U.S. average expenditure for the same classes of local governments...Ohio's non-school local governments actually spend 7.87 percent less than the national average on payroll. According to the Legislative Service Commission, in fiscal year 2008, Ohio's local taxes were \$1,782 per capita, below the national average of \$1,811. Ohio's townships do not have the authority to levy a sales tax or an income tax; they rely primarily on the local property tax. Again, according to the Legislative Service Commission, in fiscal year 2008, Ohio's property taxes were 3.3 percent of personal income, which is lower than the national average. And townships collect just 5.8 percent of the property taxes levied by local governments in Ohio, according to U.S. census bureau data.

IN THE LAST STATE BUDGET, THE STATE CHANGED LONGSTANDING FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS BY CUTTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND IN HALF AND ABRUPTLY ENDING TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY AND ELECTRIC DEREGULATION PAYMENTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

The data in that report led to one conclusion: townships are an extremely low cost form of government and any effort to abolish or consolidate them would drive up the cost of local government in ohio.

The editorial claims that Ohio's "local-government payroll" is 10 percent higher than the national average and 17.5 percent above the average of similar states. This statistic is from the "Restoring Prosperity" report. In a critique of that report from October 2010, the Education Tax

Local governments responded with even more belt-tightening. Some have gone to the ballot for property tax increases because they had no other choice, partly because of the state cuts. Some townships have laid off employees; some have not. Many townships have not laid off employees for a very simple reason: they have no employees. Can you get any leaner than that? We welcome a review of local government, but it must be based on an honest appraisal of data and not with a preconceived notion in mind.



Trustee
David Ditzler



Trustee
Lisa Oles



Trustee
James Davis



Fiscal Officer
Laura Wolfe

FIRE REPLACEMENT LEVIES ON BALLOT

On the November ballot are three Fire replacement levies. The purpose of all three levies is to replace the Local Government Fund and Tangible Personal Property tax revenue lost in the last few State biannual budgets and the Estate tax revenue that ends January 1, 2013.

The oldest levy is for 1.2 mills that was first passed by the voters in 1976 and today is taxed at the rate of approximately 0.44. A \$100,000 homeowner presently pays approximately \$13.50 a year and if the levy is approved by the voters the homeowner will pay an additional \$23.50. Homeowners 65 and older or totally and permanently disabled will pay less because they qualify for the Homestead Exemption. The Homestead Exemption offers all eligible homeowners, regardless of income,

the opportunity to shield up to \$25,000 of the market value of their homestead from property taxation. That means a home valued at \$100,000 will generally be taxed as if it was valued at \$75,000. Therefore, a Homestead Exemption homeowner who owns a house valued at \$100,000 is today paying approximately \$10.00 a year and will pay an additional \$17.50 a year if the 1.2 mill replacement levy is approved.

The next oldest levy is the 1.0 mill levy originally passed in 1984. Today a home valued at \$100,000 pays approximately \$17.50 a year or \$13.50 with the Homestead Exemption. If the replacement levy is passed the \$100,000 homeowner will pay approximately \$13.00 more a year or \$10 a year more with the Homestead Exemption.

The final replacement levy for 1.5 mills was first passed by the voters in 1992. During the past 20 years the levy's rate of taxation, because of inflation, has decreased to 0.87 so that the \$100,000 homeowner pays approximately \$26.50 instead of \$46 if the rate was 1.5. Likewise, the \$100,000 Homestead Exemption homeowner pays approximately \$20 a year at 0.87 mills instead of paying \$34.50 at 1.5 mills.

Fire Department Staffing

The Austintown Fire Department is a Combination Department. This means that our staff make-up includes not only full-time Fire Fighters but also part-time Fire Fighters who help staff our manned trucks and who also respond from their homes in the event that additional Fire Fighters are needed.

Our staffing make-up is five full-time and two part-time Fire Fighters scheduled per day. Crews assigned to Station #1 on Rt. 46 near Norquest Blvd., respond in an engine. This truck is identified as Squad 17 and has 4 fire fighters assigned to it. In the event of a vacation day or a sick day, Squad 17 responds with 3 fire fighters instead of the 4 scheduled. Squad 17 responds to all calls West of Rt. 11. The Wickliffe Station (Station #2) is staffed with 3 fire fighters who also

respond on an Engine. This truck is known as Squad 55. Squad 55 responds to all incidents East of Rt. 11. These two trucks respond to all emergency and non-emergency incidents in the Township including fires, vehicle accidents and life threatening medical calls.

When additional Fire Fighters are needed to respond beyond the 6 or 7 on duty, then the two off duty Stations are called out. Station #3 on Raccoon Rd. and Station #4 on Turner are not staffed 24 hours a day but house the Fire Fighters who respond from their homes. Incidents that would require these Fire Fighters to be called from home include structure fires, mutual aid calls with neighboring communities and multiple small incidents that occur simultaneously requiring additional staffing for a short period of time.

Fire Department Staffing Grant Awarded

The Austintown Fire Department received a grant for \$235,623 in May of 2012. This grant was awarded to the Fire Department by The Department of Homeland Security, a division of FEMA. The purpose of this Grant is to re-hire the part-time fire fighter's position that was cut in 2011. This position was eliminated in 2011 because of reduced funding from the State of Ohio to local governments.

Receiving the Grant allows the scheduling of seven fire fighters 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Prior to the Grant and because of lay-offs, at times there were only five Fire Fighters on duty at a time. The grant will make it possible to schedule 7 and staff at least 6 firefighters 7/24 in the event of a call off such as for sickness.

THREE OFFICERS RETIRE



Chief Andrew R. Frost, Jr.



Lt. Robert Rodkey



Capt. Jim Dudley

The Austintown Fire Department says goodbye to three long time officers. Within the month of August 2012, the Department lost Fire Chief Andrew Frost, Captain Jim Dudley and Lieutenant Bob Rodkey to retirement. The three have a combined 105 years of experience.

Chief Frost was hired in 1966 as a part-time fire fighter. He was promoted to Lieutenant at Station #3 in 1974. He was hired as the Fire Department's first full-time employee in 1980 and served as a Fire Inspector. Chief Frost was elevated to Assistant Chief with his final promotion to Fire Chief in 1985. The Chief's retirement was effective as of August 5, 2012.

Captain Dudley began his career in 1979 when he was hired as a part-time Fire Fighter. He came up through the ranks at Station #3 and received his final promotion in 1992, when he was elevated to Station Captain. Jim's retirement is effective September 1, 2012

Lieutenant Rodkey started with the department in 1986 as a part-time Fire Fighter/EMT. In 2005, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant at Station #3 where he has served since. His retirement began August 1, 2012.

The Department is grateful to these three men for their years of commitment, dedication and service they have given to our community over the years. They will be sorely missed and we wish them the best of luck in retirement.



AUSTINTOWN
TOWNSHIP PARKS

DOG PARK

The park hopes to have a Dog Park completed by the end of Fall 2012 at Township Park on Kirk Road. The Dog Park will contain a fenced in area of 300 square feet by 120 SF, approximately ½ an acre. Obstacles

for small and large dogs alike as well as a drinking fountain and bathing area are also planned as are benches and shade shelters for the dogs and their owners. The township is in the process of developing Rules and Regulations

for the Dog Park and all suggestions are welcome. Funding for this project is coming from both the Park levy as well as donations from residents. Please feel free to contact Todd Shaffer, Park Supervisor, at 330-793-0718, with



AUSTINTOWN SENIOR CENTER

With the passing of the 0.5 mill Senior levy last November the Senior Center has become bigger and better. The Center currently has very popular daily bingo game, a well-equipped fitness area, billiard and Ping-Pong tables, a computer lab, a book and video library, and will have renovations and equipping of a kitchen completed within the next month. Once completed and licensed the kitchen will start providing unsubsidized low cost meals to our members prepared by our volunteer kitchen crew. The Senior Center is also considering preparing a breakfast open to the public on a regular schedule similar to that provided by the Farmington senior center.

The Center recently purchased a van and has made trips to area attractions and events. The popularity of these trips has exceeded expectations. The membership has traveled to the cheese factory in Middlefield, Stouffer's outlet, Wheeling, various dogs shows to cheer on Phoebe the senior center Leonberger dog, Roger's flea market, a balloon festival, pie factory in Akron, Grove city outlets, Aurora farms, Canfield Fair, and others. Trips are planned to Hartville, Mill Creek Park, Lake Erie Wineries, Cleveland zoo, and the list grows every week. The trips are open to our members and require a non-refundable \$5.00 deposit to cover fuel costs and related travel fees.

The senior center is open From 9 – 1 on Mondays and Fridays and 9 – 3 on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The Center activities include bingo, exercise, discussion groups, educational seminars, computer classes, yoga, zumba, drums alive, line dancing, movie matinees, crocheting, various card games, Wii bowling and other Wii games, blood pressure checks, bible study, painting classes, as well as organized trips to area events. A dinner club meets monthly to savor the cuisine of local restaurants. There are also the traditional pot-luck dinners with various ethnic themes so our members can show off their culinary skills.

Membership is free to Austintown residents 60 years of age and over and out of township seniors are invited to join for \$36 per year per individual.



MAHONING COUNTY LAND BANK

Mahoning County is eligible to receive more than \$1.5 million from the Ohio Attorney General's Office to demolish vacant, abandoned houses. That's good news for Austintown, which should be able to raze about 10 blighted structures, but demolitions also add to the number of empty, underutilized lots in the township. When owners don't maintain their properties, local governments may absorb that responsibility by default.

One solution is to make those newly-demolished or long-forgotten properties available to next door neighbors. That is the first activity of the new Mahoning County Land Reutilization Corporation, better known as Mahoning County Land Bank.

Led by a 9-member Board of Directors -- including Austintown Township Trustee David Ditzler -- the County Land Bank is a not-for-profit community improvement corporation. Its purpose is to acquire and repurpose vacant, abandoned, tax-delinquent properties.

Through its Side Lot Program, the County Land Bank makes empty lots available for purchase or lease to adjoining property owners. Buyers obtain clear title to the land, not the debts and liens that may have accumulated under the previous owner.

Vacant land acquisition is just the start of the County Land Bank's activities. Going forward, the County Land Bank will strategically acquire abandoned homes that can be renovated and occupied before demolition is the only choice. It will collaborate with civic, religious and nonprofit organizations that want to create new green spaces and plant community gardens. It will assist local governments in assembling land for future projects.

Call the County Land Bank at 330-259-1040 to ask about land bank-eligible properties and Side Lot Program requirements. The County Land Bank's web site is in development and should be launched by year's end.

Ohio Treasurer's Grow Your Savings Account with SaveNOW!

SaveNOW is a program offered by the State Treasurer's office through the Treasury's linked deposits authority. SaveNOW offers a 3% bonus interest on savings accounts for Ohio citizens. Through this program, savers receive financial education newsletters to empower them to make smart money choices, while building their financial safety net. Savers are required to complete a "then and now" financial education survey to receive their bonus interest at the end of the year.

Who is Eligible?

Ohio residents are eligible to become savers without making large deposits. You can start out small, for example, with as little as \$10 a month and gradually increase your contributions. There is no age requirement to participate. However, certain restrictions may apply for custodial accounts at each participating bank.

How Does SaveNOW Work?

Saver applies for a SaveNOW savings account at participating Bank. Bank notifies Treasury of Saver's account. Ohio Treasury places an investment at Bank, which passes earnings on to Saver as bonus interest.

Questions? Please email us at www.SaveNOW.ohio.gov or call 1-800-228-1102, option #3.
State Treasurer Helping Ohio's Small Businesses GrowNOW

GrowNOW, brought to you by the State Treasurer, enables small business owners to receive a 3% interest rate reduction on new or existing small business loans for two years with the opportunity for renewal. The program is a partnership between eligible banks and the Ohio Treasury. Small business owners must commit to the creation or retention of at least one full-time job or two part-time jobs in the state of Ohio for every \$50,000 borrowed, up to \$400,000. GrowNOW broadly serves as a catalyst for Ohio's economic development by supporting the small businesses that drive it. Eligible business owners must meet the following criteria:

- MUST be able to save or create 1 full-time or 2 part-time jobs in Ohio for every \$50,000 borrowed
- MUST have headquarters in Ohio
- MUST have less than 150 employees
- MUST have a majority of employees be Ohio residents
- MUST be organized for profit
- MUST maintain offices and operating facilities in Ohio

Questions? Visit the State Treasurer's GrowNOW website at www.GrowNOW.ohio.gov or call 1-800-228-1102, option #3.

The following banks are currently participating in the linked deposit programs for the Mahoning County area:
Cortland Savings & Banking Company – GrowNOW,
Farmers National Bank - GrowNOW
Huntington National Bank – GrowNOW and ECO-Link, PNC – SaveNOW and Nationwide – SaveNOW (statewide).

34 Storm Water Projects Completed at \$4.9 Million !

In the summer of 1992 a severe storm hit the area causing widespread flooding in the township. It was called the 100 year rain. Since then the township has completed 34 storm water alleviation projects with a total cost of approximately 4.9 million dollars. The great majority of this funding came from grants such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) or State grants from the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC). The major focus of all these projects was to alleviate flooding inside of structures, whether homes or businesses.

One kind of project consisted of Retention or Detention ponds. The idea is to divert storm water, both sheet flow and water within a watercourse or piping system, to a manmade pond. The storm water is then released at a controlled rate so as to alleviate downstream flooding.

Examples are the 2 Detention ponds east/northeast of Spring Meadow Circle, the Retention pond north of the IHM property on Norquest Boulevard, the Detention pond between Resurrection Cemetery and North Raccoon Road (Catholic Diocese of Youngstown) and the Detention pond between New Road and Pembroke and west of Orkney (Fountain Square property). Those five projects cost the township a total of approximately \$450,000. The Fountain Square detention cost that property owner approximately \$300,000 and the Catholic Diocese paid for the construction of the pond on their cemetery property.

The next storm water alleviation project scheduled is the Pinecrest Storm Sewer Improvement Phase I. Construction should begin in 2013. An Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) grant for \$149,940 will pay for \$178,500 of the estimated total project costs. This project will install over 1200 feet of storm pipes, some new and others replacing existing pipes, along with 9 new catch basins and 2 new manholes. The scope of the project is from east of Beechcrest Drive to DeHoff along Pinecrest and replacing the outlet pipe from South Inglewood Drive to State route 11. The purpose of this project is to alleviate the infiltration of storm water into the Sanitary sewer system that causes sanitary backup into homes in the area.

The remaining flood alleviation project components usually included increasing the size of storm pipes and catch basins or adding storm pipes and catch basins or replacing defective storm pipes.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Austintown Police Department would like to thank the voters in Austintown for the passage in March, 2012 of the Police Replacement Levy. The passage of the levy will help the police department to maintain its current staffing level and to maintain and replace equipment as needed. The money will also be used for mandated and other necessary training to provide the residents with a highly trained and professional police department. Once again, *Thank You, the residents of Austintown, for supporting and trusting in us to be frugal with your tax dollars.*

The Austintown Police Department is responsible for the protection of life and property, the maintenance of peace and order, the provision of emergency and other police services to the public and the consistent, impartial enforcement of the law. In addition to these services the department also provides several other public services.

These services include an Over the Counter Drug Take Back Program. Through a grant the department received, a container was installed in the lobby of the police department and this secured receptacle allows our residents to anonymously drop off unused/expired or unwanted prescription medication. This program helps to keep the unwanted medication out of medicine cabinets to avoid abuse by children and adults and protecting the environment from water contamination.

Senior Citizens are provided with a Senior Watch Program. An Austintown Township Police Officer is assigned to a number of seniors to make regular visits to their homes. These Officers check on the safety and well-being of the senior. They will also help them seek assistance to any number of needs or problems that they are facing.

The police department continues to work closely with schools to provide protection and education to the students and staff. New for this year is that the Juvenile Detective and the Dare Officer have an office located inside the middle

school. This not only adds more security for the students and staff but provides a better rapport between the Officers and students. The past 12 years the Dare Officer has taught Drug Abuse Resistance Education in all our schools, both public and parochial from grades first to tenth.

We care about kids and want to protect them with proper installation of child car seats to prevent serious injury if the child is an occupant during a crash. The Child Passenger Seat Certification program has an Officer who is a Child Safety Seat Technician. The Officer will check and install all infant, children and booster seats in your vehicle. Another program dealing with vehicle safety is the 3rd Grade Seat Belt Program in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Public safety. This program is taught in 3rd grade as part of the D.A.R.E. Program.

A Vacation Check Program is provided to the residents by the police department. The police department will visit your residence and do outside security checks while you are on vacation. If you would like a vacation check call the department and the dispatcher will only ask you a few questions to begin this service.

The police department has two K-9 Units that assist the Officers with their duties and will assist any other department in the area. In addition to tracking suspect and locating drugs the K-9s have located lost children and senior citizens and have become a great asset to the community.

A Neighborhood Watch / Crime Prevention Program is available for those who wish to participate in the programs. An Officer will conduct a security survey at your home or business giving you suggestions on making it more secure against crime.

Finally, the department works with the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Special Needs Children, providing tours of the department and a chance to ask questions of the Police Officers. The department also has a mentoring and internship programs with many of the local schools and universities.



ZONING



The Austintown Township Zoning Office has issued 275 permits authorizing new construction for an approximate valuation of 34 million dollars thus far in 2012.

The permits include new single-family homes in Victory Hills, Meander Cove, Herons Landing, Fox Chase and Countryside sub-divisions.

New commercial permits include a Five Guys Burgers located at 107 South Canfield-Niles Road, a proposed Jimmy Johns restaurant at 5450 Mahoning Avenue next to the Auto Zone facility where a 7,750 sq. ft. commercial addition is almost completed.

The Austintown Board of Education secured zoning permits earlier this year for construction of a Kindergarten through Grade 2 building measuring approximately 121,000 sq. ft. and a Grade 3 through Grade 5 building measuring approximately 124,000 sq. ft.

The township zoning office anticipates reviewing plans for a national retailer who is expected to propose a 20,000 sq. ft. building located on Mahoning Avenue west of Wilcox Road. In addition, a permit review will be conducted before years end for the long anticipated Racino-Hollywood Park Slots at Mahoning Valley Park to be located at the former Centerpointe property on North Canfield-Niles Road, directly east of Silica Road.



A Groundbreaking is expected sometime in the Fall for the new Hollywood at Mahoning Valley Race Course, a state of the art, integrated racing and gaming facility that will feature up to 1,500 Video Lottery Terminals, a thoroughbred 1 mile race track, restaurants, sports bar, entertainment lounge and other amenities on State Route 46 across from Silica Road. This project economic scope includes a private capital investment of at least \$125 million and is projected to create approximately 1,000 new direct and indirect jobs in the Mahoning Valley, plus approximately 1,000 new construction jobs. The project's economic impact should keep the area's gaming dollars from escaping across the border to Pennsylvania and will benefit local area businesses, including hotels and restaurants.

Penn National is the largest regional gaming operator in the U.S. with over 17,000 employees and \$2.8 billion in annual revenues. Penn National is publicly traded on NASDAQ (PENN) with a \$3.5 billion market cap and was named as one of the 100 fastest growing companies in the country a record 6 out of 7 years.

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Hours:

Monday-Friday 8 A.M. to 4 P.M.
Voice mail also available
Website:

www.austintowntwp.com

Austintown Phone Numbers:

Emergency911
Trustees.....330-792-8139
Police: Non-Emergency
.....330-799-9721
Fire-Business330-799-8502
Road:.....330-792-2602
Park Pavilion Rentals
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Park Department ...330-793-0718
Zoning330-799-3241
Trustees Meetings 2nd & 4th
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New Fixed Rate for Natural Gas Aggregation Program

Residents currently in the township’s natural gas aggregation program will pay a new fixed rate of \$3.99 per Mcf to begin with your October 2012 meter read through October 2013. The new supplier is IGS Energy.

The new \$3.99 price obtained was based on the commodity price on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) on August 30, 2012 when the buy order was placed by the township’s energy broker. This buy order was made by the township, together with the township’s energy broker, after closely tracking the wholesale price on the NYMEX. The deadline to purchase the gas or place the Buy Order must occur no later than approximately 60 days

before the new rate is to go into effect. The purchase of natural gas from the NYMEX by the township is similar to a stock broker purchasing stock for a client based on the price of a share of that stock on the New York Stock Exchange or on the NASDAQ or other public stock exchange.

Participation is completely voluntary. In addition, there is no penalty for leaving the program unlike many offers available to the individual consumer. If you find with your November billing that you are not included in the township’s aggregation group you should contact IGS Energy (IGS Energy) at 1-800-280-4474.

PRESORTED STANDARD
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YOUNGSTOWN, OH
PERMIT NO. 214

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